exception. The fellaheen as a whole use no machinery at all. This is probably due less to habit or ignorance than to an instinct for self-preservation. If machinery is not more commonly used in Egyptian farming, the reason is that the owners find man-power more economical. For the moment the two points of view coincide. But it will not always be so. One day the fellaheen will increase their demands, and machines will become more profitable to the landowners. Manual labour should keep its leading place, however, for to mechanise labour in the Nile Valley would be to destroy the organic relationship which has grown up between the cultivators and their soil, and overthrow a balance now preserved by methods of labour appropriate to an abundant population.

2. Conditions of Work

To this soil the fellah devotes all his energies. He gives himself to it without reserve, even passionately when it is his own. But that is very rare. Here man belongs to the land, not the land to him. This is the true cause of both his lethargy and his poverty. None of the conditions under which he may labour make for freedom. Let us look in turn at each of the varying conditions which obtain today.

The Fellah as Forced Labourer

The *corvée* was suppressed in 1893, but continues to be legally applied in certain cases of public necessity. Then the fellah is mobilised by authority, torn from his field and his village, and sent to the spot where his services are needed.

It may be that the Nile flood threatens catastrophe. On such occasions hundreds of thousands of fellaheen are set to work day and night under the rod of officials and overseers to raise the embankments, build dykes, deal with any escape and watch the barrages.

Suppose a dyke is on the point of breaking. The fellaheen rush in a compact mass to the point of danger, each with his *fass* and basket. They heighten the dyke and buttress it with a great rampart composed of earth, rushes, palm-trunks, and — if need be — maize-stalks and sugar-cane.

In 1934 they saved the country by such efforts. The Government set aside L.E. 150,000 to fight the danger;

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[652]

it was used to buy materials and to pay travelling expenses and bonuses for officials. The fellaheen got no wages for their pains, no compensation for their enforced absence from the fields.

By law every Egyptian is liable to be enlisted in the fight against the flood danger. In fact, none but the fellaheen are ever called upon. However, according to the Speech from the Throne of May 1936, "No-one shall be employed henceforward on the embankments of the Nile or of the basins during the flood period without receiving appropriate payment [26]".

But there are other dangers which may threaten the prosperity of the country, cotton disease, for instance. To get rid of this pest a swarm of men, women and children must bend over the cotton plants from six o'clock till midday and from two o'clock till six, and search them row by row, plant by plant, leaf by leaf. Each infected leaf must be delicately nipped off and put into the lap of the *gallabiya*. If a single diseased leaf escapes notice the overseer just behind will see it and bring his stick down at once on the back of the culprit.

"I went up to one of these poor wretches toiling under the lash in the heat of the sun and asked him how much he got per day for his trouble: 2 piastres [26]".

In June 1936, for example, by virtue of the law of 1910, [27] a million young fellaheen were mobilised to save 435,785 feddans attacked by the pink worm [28], which devours the cotton bolls; it reproduces itself five times in a year. The Royal Agricultural Society is offering L.E. 20,000 to anyone who can find a remedy for this new plague of Egypt. Such a discovery would put an end to at least one sort of forced labour.

There is a third sort of emergency. About once every five years, the last time being in 1931 (the 1937 invasion was stopped in the desert), Egypt is attacked by vast swarms of locusts, which would destroy all the crops unless another host went out to meet them. Entire villages are transported to the worst affected areas (under the decree of 16th June 1891) to drive the swarms back to the desert or towards the sea. The method used consists in digging long trenches, keeping up smoke screens, shrieking, and flapping branches,